

Benicia Arsenal Barracks (Building No. 45)
Benicia Industrial Park
Benicia
Solano County
California

HABS No. CA-1826

HABS,
CAL,
48-BENI,
48-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Architectural and Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BENICIA ARSENAL BARRACKS
(Building No. 45)

HABS No. CA-1826

Location: Northwest corner of intersection of Roosevelt and Grant Streets, Benicia Industrial Park, Benicia, Solano County, California.

USGS Benicia Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 10.575800.4211095.

Present Owner: Benicia Industries, Inc. c/o Al Wanger, Vice-President, Benicia Industrial Park, Benicia, California 94510.

Present Occupant/Use: Vacant.

Significance: This building is an attractive housing unit for a number of troops. The exterior is ornamented by quoins at the corners and a row of Corinthian columns supporting a porch roof.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: 1872.
2. Architect: none known.
3. Original plans and construction: See HABS No. CA-1826-4 for undated plans for these barracks. These drawings were for a structure only seven bays wide, however. Apparently, two more bays were added to the plans before construction, and the building originally had a nine-bay front.
4. Alterations and additions: At some time between 1915 and World War II, the building was expanded on the northeast to its present seventeen-bay front, retaining the same style and materials. The end doorway of the original now serves as the central doorway. A break in the masonry and the cornice is visible slightly to the north of this door.

Prepared by Robert Bruegmann
Project Historian
Historic American Buildings Survey
August 1976

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The brick with stone trim and the colonnaded porch of this building provide a contrast to the earlier stone buildings of the arsenal.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: This two-story rectangular building (with partial basement) measures 132' across its seventeen-bay front by 32' deep.
2. Foundation: Brick.
3. Walls: Brick, painted ivory. Stone quoins and a belt course at the first floor level are both painted. Brick parapet walls on the gable ends are capped with stone and painted.
4. Structural system, framing: Brick load-bearing walls with wood floor and roof framing.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: A porch extends across the southeast front, its flat roof supported by fluted wood columns capped with Corinthian capitals. A simple wood rail extends between each column. Concrete steps with iron pipe railings lead up to the porch.

A wooden, open-string stairway near the center of the building leads down through the porch floor to the basement, landing in an areaway. An iron railing extends from the basement level up to the stair and ends at an iron newel on the porch. The iron railing extends around the stair opening on the porch. The areaway is open on the southwest end and enclosed by concrete retaining walls on the southeast and northeast. There are two iron ladder fire-escapes on the northwest side of the building.

- 6. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys are located on the roof ridge.
7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: There are six entrances from the porch into the building. Doors are wood panel with four lights in the upper section, two-light transom window, heavy wood surrounds and stone sills. There are two doors on the rear of the building leading from the basement.
- b. Windows: Wooden windows have six-over-six-light double-hung sash, painted stone sills, and wood surrounds. There is a semicircular window in each gable. All windows are boarded up on the interior with plywood.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: A gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. There is a roof hatch on the front slope and brick parapets at each end.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Eaves and cornice are boxed in. The cornice extends around the ends of the quoins. There is a built-in gutter with metal downspouts. The cornice on the porch is boxed in with cyma-recta moldings, modillions and a plain frieze.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: There is a raised basement under the southwest (original) half of the building, with windows and doorways opening into an areaway on the southeast and opening to the exterior on the northwest. The basement houses a toilet and shower room and the boiler room. A stairway leads from a hallway up to the first floor.
- b. First floor: At each end of the front, a doorway leads into a stair hall. From each stair hall the building is divided into a number of rooms, some with entrances to the porch.
- c. Second floor: The second floor is similar to the first floor, being divided into two large spaces with toilet rooms at either end, above the stairways.

- 2. Stairways: There is a closed-string wooden dog-leg stair on each end of the building leading to the second floor. On the southwest end the stair also leads down to the basement. The wooden handrail extends from a newel on the first floor to a

newel at the landing and is enclosed to the second floor. The banister has been enclosed with vertical wood panels. The stair extends across a window on each end.

3. Flooring: Flooring on first and second floor is wide wooden planks, some covered with linoleum. Floors in the basement are concrete.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls are painted plaster and ceilings are painted wooden boards. There is a vertical board wainscot with a chair rail molding.
5. Doorways and doors: Doors are wood panel with heavy wood surrounds.
6. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: Each room has steam radiators supplied from a furnace in the basement. There is an iron air grille in the furred space around the chimney on the southwest end of the building.
 - b. Lighting: All lighting has been removed from the building.

D. Site:

The barracks faces southeast on a sloping site in the industrial park. Asphalt paving surrounds the building. There is a concrete retaining wall on the southwest end of the building that extends around to the southeast ending at the areaway walls. There are industrial buildings across the street to the southwest and vacant lots on the southeast where buildings have been removed.

Prepared by: John P. White
Project Supervisor
Historic American Buildings Survey
August 1976

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural drawings: In the National Archives, Cartographic Division, Record Group 156, are two drawings that seem to pertain to this building:

BENICIA ARSENAL BARRACKS
(Building No. 45)
HABS No. CA-1826 (Page 5)

"Barracks for Benicia Arsenal." Black ink with pink and blue watercolor on heavy paper. Contains two plans of the basement; a plan of the ground and second floors, each showing the framing; a transverse section; and two elevations and several details, notably those of the chimney and stoves. On the reverse are more chimney and stove details. Folder 1. (HABS No. CA-1826-4)

Unlabeled drawing. Black ink on paper. 39x26. Shows elevation of Corinthian colonnade of nine bays, together with details. Folder 2.

B. Early Views:

Two U.S. Army photographs, ca. 1915. One shows the southwest side and southeast front and the other shows the southeast front and northeast side. (HABS No. CA-1826-2 and -3)

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with Exxon Company, U.S.A. (a division of Exxon Corporation) and the Benicia Historical Society. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of H.A.B.S., the project was completed during the summer of 1976 at the Historic American Buildings Survey Field Office, Benicia, California, by John P. White (Assistant Professor, Texas Tech University), Project Supervisor; Robert Bruegmann (University of Pennsylvania), Project Historian; Kenneth Payson (Cornell University), Architect; and student assistant architects Scott Barnard (University of Pennsylvania); James L. Cook (Texas Tech University); and Gary A. Statkus (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign). The written data were edited by Alison K. Hoagland in the HABS Washington office in January, 1981.